

Government must finally support young people

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Body

Young Canadians are undeniably and inexcusably getting ripped off.

Low wages, jobs without benefits or security, rising tuition, mountains of student debt, sky-high child care costs, unchecked cellphone and credit card companies, astronomical rents, and housing markets with no entry level; this generation is being set up for financial failure.

A few months ago in Ottawa, I sat down with a young boy who has a chronic illness, but while he's bravely fighting the battle for his health, what's keeping him up at night is how much his medicine costs his family.

In Toronto, a young family I've met is struggling with the cost of child care. They're working hard and doing everything right, just like their parents did, but they're still living in fear of some unexpected expense that means ends just don't meet.

And I've spoken to young families that are putting off growing their family, because the cost of child care is overwhelming, and the cost of a place with an extra bedroom is out of reach. It's heartbreaking to think that the joy of building a family is being dimmed by the economic squeeze young people are feeling.

For decades, governments have taken turns making life easier for the multimillionaires and mega-corporations, and harder for my friend in Ottawa, the young family in Toronto and the rest of us.

We were promised better.

Today's workers, young families, college and university students, and student debt-payers have every right to feel hopeless. To think that politics is just a system designed to help make life easier for the very richest, and harder for the rest of us.

But they're not cynical. Something special is happening across the country. Waves of young people are coming forward to demand a new deal for people - for themselves and their families, and for their kids. They're demanding economic justice. Climate justice. Social justice.

I'm with them. I'm in it for them.

They deserve someone in Ottawa fighting on their side.

Canada has the third highest drug prices in the world and we're the only country with universal health care that still makes people pay for the medicine they need.

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People shouldn't be forced to choose between paying for rent or paying for medication. They deserve a government ready to take on Big Pharma by implementing health coverage, starting by extending pharmacare coverage to every Canadian.

They deserve a government more interested in their ability to find a home than in developers' ability to make billions. I believe that with 500,000 new affordable homes, we can ease the housing crunch that's eating too far into people's incomes.

And they deserve a government on their side instead of on the side of the telecom giants.

I know how important it is to have affordable and reliable access to cell and internet services. My new deal cracks down on cellphone companies that have their hands too deep in the bank accounts of families.

My platform also transforms our economy into one that works better for young people by creating a minimum of 300,000 good, stable, green jobs - while taking the climate crisis seriously. We have to fight climate change like we actually want to win.

Of course, we need a way to pay for all this.

That's why our New Deal for People charges a new tax on multimillionaires, closes tax loopholes and cracks down on tax evaders; so everyone contributes their fair share.

Today's young workers have seen governments hug them in public, then make backroom deals with corporate friends behind closed doors. They deserve better. They need someone on their side.

Jagmeet Singh is the leader of the federal New Democratic Party.

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